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**December 5, 2019**

- Esmeralda Soria, Council District 1**
- Mike Karbassi, Councilmember District 2**
- Miguel Arias, Council Vice President District 3**
- Paul Caprioglio, Councilmember District 4**
- Luis Chavez, Councilmember District 5**
- Garry Bredefeld, Councilmember District 6**
- Nelson Esparza, Councilmember District 7**

**Subject:** General Plan Related Resolution Item ID 19-11556 on 11-14-19 Fresno City Council Agenda, Transformed into Resolution Item ID 19-11608 on 12-5-19 Fresno City Council Agenda, Now All Moved to 12-12-19 Fresno City Council Agenda.

**Dear Fresno City Council Members:**

I am writing you because of concerns about the process of repeated changes to content and hearing dates associated with the subject General Plan Resolutions.

We are trying to be well informed, responsible, and engaged community members that are prepared to respectfully address the City Council about scheduled agenda items of importance to the community. However, in this case, with quick changes of dates (11-14-19 to 12-5-19 to 12-12-19) and changes in the hearing item's content - it is proving very difficult to keep up with these moving targets and be available to address the City Council face-to-face. Thus my letter just in case. We hope the City Council appreciates that the community and businesses have daily obligations as well and need certainty about both the content of items being considered and the days and times items will be heard, in order to be available to provide meaningful, relevant and timely input into our public local government processes.

That said, I am writing on behalf of Fresno Metro Ministry, located at 4270 N. Blackstone, Fresno, CA 93726. Fresno Metro Ministry has been engaged for 49 years with community improvement and development work along with Fresno area churches, public institutions, and community resident groups. Our mission is Learning, Connecting & Engaging to Achieve Healthy People and Healthy Places. Our work and staff members are embedded in Fresno's disadvantaged communities, focused on the existing built city and the major challenges of residents and businesses. We are quite concerned about how City land use planning,

development and others policies impact the health and life opportunities of local stakeholders we work with, since the historical results have not been broadly positive for Fresno. Some of the projects we are now working on include the following:

- Better Blackstone – Through a grant from Caltrans in partnership Fresno COG, City of Fresno, CSUF, and five local architectural firms, we are currently evaluating and offering design alternatives, development impact and gap financing analyses consistent with the City Development Code for 300 parcels along the Blackstone corridor to encourage mixed-use development and facilitate implementation of the Fresno General Plan.
- Food to Share – We have recovered nearly 3 million pounds of healthy food the past 3 years that otherwise would be wasted, redistributing the food through 49 churches and CBOs in disadvantaged neighborhoods. This is an effort to address the extreme food insecurity driven by high concentrated poverty in Fresno, the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest food hardship Metro Area in the U.S.
- Cooking Matters – We are teaching healthy cooking and nutrition education in Food to Share neighborhoods – as an attempt to help prevent diabetes and hypertension – both serious and way above average chronic diseases in Fresno costing hundreds of millions of dollars to address if not prevented.
- Community Gardens – We are managing 14 acres of community gardens with hundreds of community gardeners who grow food for their families.
- What’s Cooking Fresno? – We are/have been training 36 low-income aspiring food entrepreneurs to launch their own food-based businesses in Fresno.
- Fresno Community & Economic Development Partnership – Fresno Metro Ministry is fiscal agent in partnership with Every Neighborhood with ENP – Helping sustain and grow a group now composed of 12 neighborhood based CDCs/EDCs who are addressing various issues social, economic and health issues in their Fresno neighborhoods.
- Fresno Community Health Improvement Partnership – Fresno Metro Ministry is the fiscal agent and program partner for this growing network of more than 400 local leaders from 150 organizations.

Comments about the Subject General Plan Resolutions for the Administrative Record:

1. Original resolution ID 19-11556 (11-14-19 Fresno City Council Agenda) that started the public hearing and proposed actions is quite different from today’s resolution item ID 19-11608 (12-5-19). The former resolution contained numerous unsubstantiated declarations that were not - and are not - supported by any systematic evidence-based evaluations as called for in Chapter 12 of GP – the language from which is recited in the declarations of the today’s Resolution.
2. Articles by GV Wire on 12-18-18 and 11-13-19 – and The Fresno Bee 11-12-19 – contained similar declarations and assertions by Fresno Council Members that were not - and are not - supported by any systematic evidence-based evaluations as called for in Chapter 12 of General Plan.

3. There were two declarations in today's resolution (12-5-19) again not supported by any systematic evidence-based evaluations as called for in Chapter 12 of GP –these were:
  - WHEREAS, the objectives, goals, and policies of the Fresno General Plan have been implemented since adoption.
  - WHEREAS, the City Council desires to initiate a comprehensive update of the Fresno General Plan in order to better incentivize development, expand access to housing, and to better accommodate the changed local conditions, circumstances, and environmental factors.
4. Fresno Metro Ministry agrees with the arguments made by The Fresno Bee in their 12-4-19 editorial piece entitled 'How to best help run-down neighborhoods? By not growing outward.'
5. Fresno Metro Ministry believes Fresno can be an inclusively healthy and prosperous Central City for our growing region – if it recognizes and persists in developing its many advantages as a Central City - just as many successful Metro Areas across in the U.S. have demonstrated. These long-term efforts in Fresno must emphasize community revitalization and new urban 'place making' within current boundaries as called for in the General Plan. The efforts must be aimed at actually developing the potent benefits of being the intense active urban center of our four county market area with a range of regional commercial and institutional services, and employment, education, transportation, innovation, entrepreneurship and entertainment opportunities and more, and not push us into competing with ourselves and regional neighbors for a share of new and very likely unrewarding and unsustainable sprawl. Fresno wins by growing up, not out, and seeing everyone in the region as a stakeholder and customer for a thriving Central City.
6. The current quality-of-life and long-term health and prosperity of existing City residents and businesses needs to be given the highest priority. They do not need more assumptions about what does and does not work. They need attention and respect, higher public service levels, and renewed public infrastructure and facilities to draw in new private investment. The City Council should be most concerned about improving areas it is currently charged with stewarding before adding more geographic areas it may not be able to care for either.
7. The central arguments made in the media by supporters of this resolution appear to be driven by FOMO, Fear of Missing Out, and assumptions and feelings that the current General Plan is not working. All these apparent jealousies, fears, feelings and assumptions need to be abandoned in favor of fact checks in the form of thorough assessments and comprehensive analyses of all fiscal costs and revenues, with trend forecasts that include the impacts of significant differences in tax sharing agreements for newly annexed land versus development in the existing city. Measurement and trend forecasts related to impacts on other key resources, and social, economic, environmental health and housing conditions need to be made as well. In other words, externalities

also be must considered. The analyses are complex and time consuming, but cost a small fraction of a brand new General Plan and can provide an authentic and unbiased report for everyone involved to use to make sound judgments.

8. Fresno Metro Ministry believes that unless and until a systematic factual evaluation of the current General Plan, including the City's genuine attempts to implement the plan's goals and policies is conducted, in conjunction with the guidance and input from some form of diverse Community, Business and Industry Advisory Committee – the City Council has not made the case for the various resolutions we have seen so far, nor has it justified the enormous potential expenditures of taxpayer funds implied by the premature actions called for in the various resolutions to launch a new General Plan formulation process.

Thank you for reading this letter and considering a complete community involved evaluation before initiating a comprehensive plan amendment process.

Sincerely,



Keith Bergthold, Executive Director

CC: Mayor and City Attorney